

very mistake for which it eviscerated the Clinton regime: running roughshod over legitimate concerns of Western communities and putting the federal treasury at risk.

A decade ago, during the reign of George H.W. Bush, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management tried to revamp environmental rules and financial accountability standards for hard-rock mines operating on public property. But the effort got sidelined while Congress debated major changes to the underlying federal statute. After the congressional push fizzled in 1997, then-U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt started a formal process to modernize the mining rules.

The old regulations were written in 1980, just before technological changes revolutionized the modern mining business. The old rules simply didn't reflect the new realities—to leave them in place would be akin to regulating jet airliners based on the concept of horse-drawn wagons.

The tough administrative process took four years, generated 550 pages of public comments and survived several congressional attempts to scuttle the effort. So while the rules took effect just before President Clinton left office, they'd been in the works for years and had been thoroughly and publicly discussed.

Despite the hyperbolic complaints leveled by partisan critics, the new regulations won't prevent mining on public lands. Instead, they just fixed glaring problems.

For decades, the BLM said it couldn't block any mining operation on public land, even if the mine would cause social or environmental harm. Near Yarnell, Ariz., for instance, a proposed mine would have opened within 500 feet of the town. People would have had to evacuate their homes during blasting, and would have suffered from mine dust, noise and other problems. Yet under the 1980 rules, BLM couldn't either stop it or do anything to help.

Moreover, the old rules left taxpayers liable for cleaning up environmental messes. The poster child for all mining fiascos is Summitville in southwestern Colorado, where in the early 1990s poisons from a bankrupt mine devastated the Rio Grande's high altitude headwaters. But other states have suffered, too. Nevada alone has 36 bankrupt mine sites—all recent, modern operations—where taxpayers have been left footing the environmental clean up bill. By contrast, the Clinton-era rules require mines to put up adequate bonds, so if the companies go bankrupt, taxpayers aren't stuck with the tab.

Yet the Bush administration's announcement Tuesday indicates that the BLM may retreat to the old way of doing business. It's hypocritical for the Bush team to pretend it can provide more thought and public input on the matter in just a 45-day comment period than the issue received during four years of intense administrative and congressional debate.

TRIBUTE TO STATE COMMANDER RONALD L. AMEND

HON. JAMES A. BARCIA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2001

Mr. BARCIA. I wish today, Mr. Speaker, to pay tribute to State Commander Ronald L. Amend, for his many years of devoted service to his country in the United States Air Force and as a leader of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Michigan.

As a life member of VFW Post 7486 in Fairgrove, Michigan, Ron has worked on be-

half of veterans and their families since he first joined the organization after tours of duty with the Air Force in Vietnam and assignment at Fairchild Air Force Base near Spokane, Washington. His focused attention to duty and lead-by-example approach has provided greatly needed assistance to veterans throughout the state and helped to ensure that their sacrifices on and off the field of battle are honored by all citizens.

Ron has always given a full measure of his time and talents in all his undertakings. He has earned a reputation for turning difficult missions into successful endeavors wherever he has gone. As an Air Force enlisted man, as a veterans' advocate, as a father and husband, as a 29-year employee of Delphi Saginaw Steering Systems and as a long-time resident of Reese, Michigan, Ron has used his great skills to benefit others. While he has earned many awards and decorations during his military service and with the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization, Ron has always done his job without seeking glory or personal gain. His work stands as a model for all citizens now and in the future.

Indeed, Ron's colleagues in the Veterans of Foreign Wars have long been aware of his significant contributions. He has held many positions with the organization, including Post Commander and becoming an All-American District Commander.

Like many success stories, Ron's many achievements have been the product of his own hard work coupled with the loving support of his wife of 27 years, Sandi, and his children, Ross and Kari. Ron is quick to recognize that he could never have accomplished all that he has done without their help.

I ask my colleagues to join me in expressing gratitude to State Commander Ronald L. Amend for his outstanding service and wish him continued success in safeguarding the future and attending to the needs of fellow veterans everywhere.

CELEBRATING GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. MIKE MCINTYRE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 20, 2001

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the nation of Greece and recognize Americans of Greek descent in celebration of Greek Independence Day. Their spirit and determination throughout history has been an inspiration to us all.

Throughout nearly four hundred years of Ottoman oppression, the Greeks maintained a unique cultural heritage. Toward the end of the Turkish occupation, this rich heritage instilled a new sense of nationalism in the Greek people. The ancient Greek ideal of freedom influenced them as well, and on March 25, 1821, they began a revolution that would eventually result in their liberty. This new independence was a victory not only for the Greeks but also for democracy.

The history and culture of the Greeks have had a profound influence on the United States. The democratic values of the ancient Greeks encouraged our own revolution and inspired the development of our government. More re-

cently, Greece has been a dependable ally, providing its support and friendship. In addition, Greek Americans continually benefit this nation, blessing us with their strong work ethic and distinctive culture.

My fellow colleagues, please join me in congratulating Greece and its people on one hundred eighty years of independence.

VETERANS NATIONAL CEMETERY IN NORTH FLORIDA

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 22, 2001

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, Florida's veterans population is the largest in the nation second only to California.

When I introduced legislation in the 104th to designate 1,500 acres of Cecil Field for a veterans cemetery, the veteran populations of the Florida and Georgia counties was 314,180. Today, that number is 451,127. The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs and the Georgia Department of Veterans Affairs provided this information. That represents a sizeable increase in the number of veterans living in this area. So, in just five or six years we have about 137,000 more veterans living in this region.

These statistics bear out the fact that there is a definite need for an additional cemetery to serve the northeast section of Florida and southern Georgia.

The nearest "open" VA cemetery serving the northeast Florida and southern Georgia veteran community catchment area is located in Bushnell, Florida, which is a three-hour drive from Jacksonville. An existing national cemetery in St. Augustine is full. The next closest in proximity is to be found in Marietta, Georgia just north of Atlanta.

I hope my colleagues, especially my fellow Floridians, will join me and Representative ANDER CRENSHAW in our efforts to get a national cemetery in the Jacksonville metropolitan area.

PRINTING REVISED UPDATED VERSION OF "BLACK AMERICANS IN CONGRESS, 1870-1989"

SPEECH OF

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 21, 2001

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 43. This legislation would support the authorization and printing of a revised and updated version of the House document "Black Americans in Congress."

This document delivers an abundance of information on the accomplishments of African Americans who served as members of Congress from 1870-1989 as well as updates the current status of African Americans in Congress. It highlights African American involvement in politics during historic periods such as the Reconstruction Era and the fight for civil rights during the Civil Rights Movement.

"Black Americans in Congress" is important because it explains how over the past 12